

Characteristics of the 2005 Japanese Election

Masamichi Ida

The Japanese general election of 2005 was a compilation of Koizumi politics and a historical election. Moreover, we can say it was a dramatic election or a theater-type election. In order to understand 2005 election, we need to take a brief look at the distinctiveness of the election, the electoral campaign process, and the analysis of the result. Through understanding that election, we can comprehend the tide of Japanese politics.

Distinctiveness of the 2005 election

The 2005 general election had several characteristic things. Prime Minister Koizumi dissolved the House of Representatives when the House of Councilors rejected the legislation to privatize the postal services on August 8. We can say this dissolution was a historical one.

Only one year and nine months had passed since the previous general election of November, 2003, amounting to less than half of four years term of office (two years). In 1980, Prime Minister Ohira dissolved the House of Representatives within two years. At that time, it was dissolution ("Happening dissolution") due to the abnormal circumstances of the House of Representative passing a no confidence resolution against the Ohira Cabinet due to the internal conflicts of the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP).

The 2005 general election contradicted the trends of recent years as follows.

(1) **Toward a two party system by the growth of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).**

After a new electoral system was introduced in 1994, Japanese politics gradually transitioned to a two-party system. For instance, a political scientist Steven R. Reed expressed the trend of party system in Japan as "Haltingly towards a Two-Party System"¹. In fact, DPJ had grown in power since the end of the 1990's. In the past three general election, the DPJ acquired 52 seats in 1996, 127 in 2000, and 177 in 2003. However, the DPJ suffered an overwhelming defeat in the 2005 election, so the movement toward a two-party system retreated.

1 Steven R. Reed (2005) "Japan : Haltingly Towards a Two-Party System" In Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell eds., *The Politics of Electoral Systems* Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 277-93.

(2) The tendency for voter's becoming disillusioned with politics shown by declining voter turnout.

The voter turnout rate for general elections decreased to about 60% after the new electoral system was introduced in 1994, compared with the usually over 70% voter turnout rate under the old electoral system. However, the voter turnout rate in the general election rose by about eight points over the previous general election, and exceeded 67 points in 2005. This turnout rate indicated voter's high concern about the 2005 election.

(3) Planning for careful dissolution.

After the party realignment in the 1990's, the life of the cabinet was shorter than the 1955 system. However, we recognize that the Prime Minister becomes so careful for dissolution was seen since Mixed System was introduced in 1994. Both of three in the past dissolution time had passed from the last general election for three years or more. The author think that Single-Member District System (SMD) is a one factor to make the Prime Minister at time make it carefully for the dissolution.

The possibility that the administrative power could be changed by a general election was extremely low under the old Japanese Electoral System (multi-member district system). Therefore, it was possible for the prime minister to dissolve the House of Representatives at relative ease. However, there is now a danger of losing office when a contrary wind blows against the party in power because the new SMD system generated the possibility of a sudden change. Therefore, the prime ministers have tended to becomes more careful when orchestrating a dissolution. For example, the dissolution in October 2003 by Prime Minister Koizumi occurred three and a half years after previous election.

However in August 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi dissolved the House of Representatives. He was declaring the intention of the Cabinet to dissolves the House of Representatives considering the no confidence vote when voted down July 6 when the postal administration bill was passed by in the House of Representatives though a large amount of rebellion from the LDP were exist².

However, the House of Representatives passed the postal administration bill by a small majority³. It was logically contradictory to dissolve the House of Representatives because the postal administration bill had been voted it down in the House of Councilors. It may have been logically valid to dissolve the House of Representatives if the postal administration bill had been resolved again in the House of Representatives, and the rejection was assumed to be grounds Prime Minister Koizumi launched into dissolution.

The government party did not have the 2/3 necessary seats resolve the House of Representatives again, so Prime Minister Koizumi did not resolve it. However, the 2/3 seats requirement is the same in the House of Representatives

2 *The Yomiuri Shimbun*. July 6, 2005,

3 As for the postal service of Japan, not only the post service but also savings and the insurance service are included.

as long as the House of Councilors' rebellion doesn't change the voting behavior because members of the House of Councilors are unchanged. Thus, right after the House of Councilors voted down the postal administration bill, Prime Minister Koizumi dissolved the House of Representatives.

In his book "Stately politics", Kaoru Yosano, an influential LDP member of the Diet described calling to Shizuka Kamei, an influential LDP member of the Diet and the forerunner of the opposition to privatize the postal service on August 6, 2005, immediately before the vote in the House of Councilors. Yosano persuaded Kamei as follows, "You might stop the bill rejection in the House of Councilors because Prime Minister Koizumi might dissolve the House of Representatives".

In contrast, Kamei a person of political common sense stated, "It is not certain that Koizumi can dissolve the House of Representatives"⁴.

The Koizumi strategy could not be forecast by a political professional who was well versed in the Japanese political world. Koki Kobayashi, defeated by the assassin candidate Yuriko Koike in the 2005 election, wrote in his own book as follows:

"I was taking an optimistic view, but even so. I could not predict of Prime Minister Koizumi's decision, although looking back, it was stupid of me to do so. If all 37 people resign from the LDP, the LDP might lose its majority in an election. However, Prime Minister Koizumi actually banished all 37 people. This kind of thing was unthinkable by the current LDP, I could not nothing but be surprised"⁵.

Generally, the media evaluated this dissolution negatively. For Instance, the top Japanese newspaper *The Yomiuri Shimbun* evaluated this dissolution in its August 9 editorial dated as follows:

It was unprecedented for the lower house to be dissolved due to the upper house's rejection of bills earlier endorsed by the lower chamber. At an extraordinary meeting of his Cabinet on Monday, Koizumi dismissed Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Yoshinobu Shimamura, who opposed the lower house dissolution, and immediately took over his portfolio to pave the way for dissolving the house.

What Koizumi did reminds us of a 1954 political drama in which Shigeru Yoshida, then known as the one-man prime minister, attempted to dissolve the lower house. He threatened to dismiss dissident Cabinet members led by then Deputy Prime Minister Taketora Ogata. Political turmoil was averted when the prime minister abandoned his plan after much persuasion by Hayato Ikeda, then secretary general of Yoshida's party.

4 Kaoru Yosano (2008) *Dodo Taru Seiji (Stately Politics)* Tokyo: Shinchosha p. 43.

5 Koki Kobayashi (2006) *Shuken Zaibei Keizai (Sovereign Economy Of the USA in Japan)* Tokyo: Kobunsha, p. 41.

Thus, it is the first time in Japan's postwar political history that a prime minister has dared to dissolve the lower house even at the expense of sacking one of his Cabinet members

Prime Minister Koizumi — who concurrently serves as president of the LDP — has said he would “do away with the old LDP” and pursue his political goals with “a new LDP.” Based on this, he has declared the party will not officially endorse as candidates the 37 LDP lawmakers who voted against the postal bills in the lower house and will instead field rival candidates in those dissident members' single-seat constituencies.

If those who do not obtain LDP tickets choose to launch a new party, the conservative camp will be divided into two groups. If this happens, the LDP — which is to mark its 50 th anniversary in November — will encounter the worst moment since its foundation.

In 1980, then Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira dissolved the lower house when a vote of no-confidence against the Cabinet passed in the house because of the absence of lawmakers belonging to an LDP faction led by former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. Following what was seen as an accidental development in the Diet, Ohira thought of refusing to authorize party tickets for all Fukuda faction members in the snap election. But a party breakup was averted as he eventually had second thoughts after being persuaded by political allies and aides.

Koizumi's statements and behavior leading up to the dissolution of the lower house have been very unusual compared with postwar parliamentary practice. In plain terms, we must ask whether he has violated the accepted process of constitutional government⁶.

Weakening the sense of existence of the DPJ

The LDP leadership decided to reject nomination for rebellion for privatization for postal service bill, and running candidates to oppose rebellious members. As a result, the coverage of Mass Media concentrated on the LDP.

Table 1 lists the number of printed words for the two major parties, Liberal-Democratic Party and Democratic Party, for the election campaign period of 2003 and 2005 in major Japanese newspapers (Asahi, Yomiuri, and Mainichi). The election campaign period means the substantial election campaign period that started immediately after the dissolution. The number of words from the day after the House of Representatives dissolution to the day of the general election is listed in the upper row in Table 1.

The number of words for the DPJ in three major newspapers was suited from its 85% (Asahi) of the Liberal-Democratic Party for 2003 within the range of 90% (Mainichi). Otherwise, the ratio decreased greatly in the 2005 election from 57% (Mainichi) to 68% (Yomiuri) in the general election report in 2005.

6 *The Daily Yomiuri*. August 9, 2005.

Table 1 The number of words for LDP and DPJ in Japanese major newspapers

	2003/10/11-11/9			2005/8/9-9/11		
	LDP	DPJ	DPJ ÷ LDP	LDP	DPJ	DPJ ÷ LDP
<i>Asahi</i>	1752	1493	85%	2772	1835	66%
<i>Yomiuri</i>	1803	1548	86%	2762	1886	68%
<i>Mainichi</i>	1731	1564	90%	2513	1427	57%
	2003/10/11-20			2005/8/9-18		
	LDP	DPJ	DPJ ÷ LDP	LDP	DPJ	DPJ ÷ LDP
<i>Asahi</i>	512	401	78%	789	454	58%
<i>Yomiuri</i>	519	444	86%	860	509	59%
<i>Mainichi</i>	492	408	83%	714	357	50%

Data Source: The Asahi Shimbun Data base *Kikuzou*, The Yomiuri Shimbun Data base *Yomidasu*, The Mainichi Shimbun Data Base *Mainichi News Pac*.

The number of words for the LDP and the DPJ at ten days after dissolution presented in the lower row in Table 1. It decreases to the level of 50 or 60 percent in 2005, while the number of words for the DPJ was about 80 percent of that of the LDP in 2003. Thus, the coverage of the 2005 election in major Japanese newspapers was biased toward reports related to the LDP rather than toward the election reporting in 2003 that the LDP might lose a majority.

Next, let us examine the issue from a similar viewpoint including the House of Councilors election. During the Koizumi Administration, two general election and two Upper House election were held. The elections that demonstrated that the LDP had won were the 2001 House of Councilors election and the 2005 general election. Both the 2004 House of Councilors election in which the LDP had fewer seats than the DPJ and the 2003 general election in which the LDP could not acquire a majority of the seats may have foretold the LDP defeat.

We also examined the number of words printed about the LDP and the DPJ in press report for vote day one month about the two House of Councilors elections. Assuming the number of printed words for the LDP to be 100, the DPJ had 80% of the number of LDP words in the Asahi Shimbun, 89% in the Yomiuri Shimbun, and 90% in the Mainichi Shimbun in the 2004 election. In contrast, it was 50% in the 2001 election in the Asahi Shimbun and the Mainichi Shimbun and 61% in the Yomiuri Shimbun.

Therefore, the results for the House of Representatives election are similar to those of the House of Councilors election. For the LDP victory, the ratio of the number of printed words for the DPJ to that of the LDP is extremely low. The Koizumi technique for succeeding in 2001 and 2005 dealt a crushing defeat of the DPJ by concentrating on the LDP, and weakening the sense of existence of the DPJ.

Transition of cabinet and party approval rating

Next, let us examine the transition of the public opinion from before the

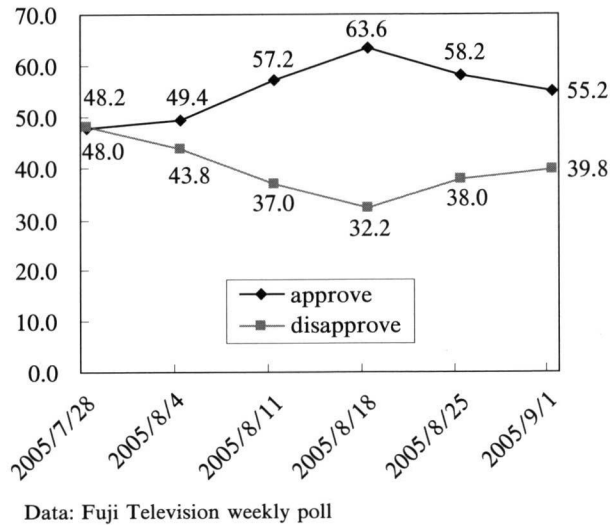


Figure 1 Transition of Approval rate for Koizumi Cabinet

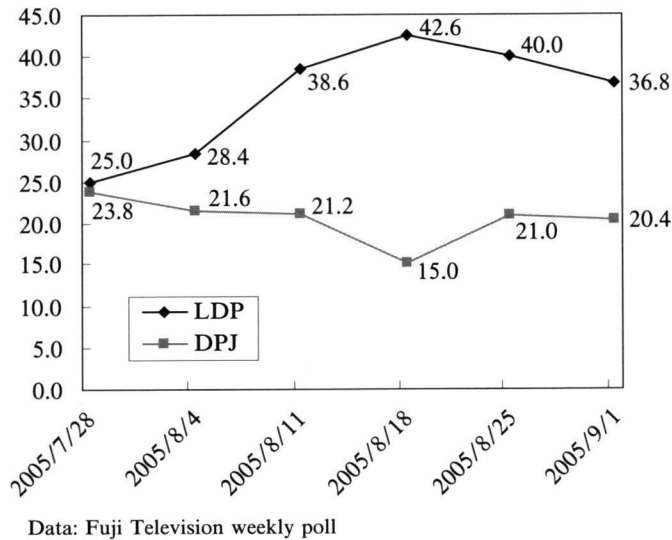


Figure 2 Transition of LDP and DPJ Identifier

House of Representatives was dissolved to the election campaign period.

Figure 1 presents the results of Fuji Television Network “Report (Hodo) 2001” weekly poll that conducted for metropolitan area voters in Kanto region.⁷ The approval and disapproval ratings for the Koizumi cabinet were almost the same at the end of July. However the approval rating rose a little on August 4 when the postal administration bill vote in the House of Councilors entered the

⁷ Data from Fuji Television HP. http://www.fujitv.co.jp/b_hp/2001/chousa/chousa.html

countdown stage, and the disapproval rating fell slightly. This change was a sign of the following Koizumi whirlwind.

The cabinet approval rating rose significantly in the ten days following the dissolution and reached 60% on August 18. Afterwards, the approval rating tended to decrease gradually. However the approval rating exceeded the disapproval rating by about 15 points on September 1. The percentage of party identification also moves similarly to the transition of the cabinet approval rating.

There were little difference between the percentage of voters identifying with the LDP and those identifying with the DPJ at the end of July (see Figure 2). However, after the House of Representatives was dissolved, the percentage of voter identifying with the LDP increased significantly, so the LDP's lead over the DPJ expanded.

Judging from these results, the LDP domination of public opinion was formed in about ten days after the House of Representative had dissolved on August 8. In that period, there were the dissolution, Prime Minister Koizumi's dissolution speech, and the caused event is the decision to reject a rebellious member's nomination, all while running assassin candidate.

Agenda setting by Prime Minister Koizumi

Prime Minister Koizumi described the dissolution in a public speech on August 8 as follows, "This election is a postal administration election that asked whether the voters were for or against privatization of the postal services", and subsequently set the agenda setting voluntarily. However, the problem was the low priority level of the postal administration problem in public opinion.

The policy that the voter desired the Koizumi Cabinet to work on by priority was measures to boost the economy (60%) and the social security system reform (56%) according to a nationwide public opinion poll taken by the Yomiuri Shimbun in June, 2005. In contrast, only 7% of the respondents wanted privatization of postal services making this 16 th of the 17 items of the investigation.

The standpoint of "Privatization of postal services agreement" is clearly stated in an editorial on August 10, but on August 9 the Asahi Shimbun commented, "However, it is an incomprehensible dissolution" in the editorial.

What priority did voters assign to the privatization of postal services during an electoral campaign?

Table 2 indicates the transition in the public opinion poll result of Fuji Television Network "Report (Hodo) 2001". This opinion poll asks "In this election, what do you want each political party to fight as an issue ?" in privatization of the postal services, the social security system, the tax system and financial matters, the diplomatic issues, or constitutional revision (single-answer method).

As a result, 30 percent or more of the voters chose privatization of postal services in the early stage of the campaign. The percentage began to fall to 22.4 points in the poll of September 1.

Table 2 Most important issue

	2005/8/11	2005/8/18	2005/8/25	2005/9/1
Postal service	31.2	33.0	28.8	22.4
Social security	30.6	30.0	41.8	37.8
Financial matter	25.0	25.8	—	23.0
Diplomatic issues	7.2	7.2	4.8	3.2
Constitution	3.2	2.6	2.2	1.8

Data: Fuji Television weekly poll

At the same time, the Koizumi cabinet approval rate and the percentage of LDP identifier change corresponded with the ratio of the people who chose the postal administration problem. Therefore, there was a correlation between the priority of the postal administration problem and the intension to vote for the LDP (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The LDP leadership rejected the nomination of 33 incumbents who voted against the privatization of postal services bill in July. In addition, they decided to run the opposition candidates in all the districts where it was assumed that the rebellious members would run.

Result and analysis

Overall result

The result of the 2005 election was a landslide victory for the LDP. The LDP acquired 296 of the total 480 seats and increased its number of seats in 2003 by about 60. On the other hand, the DPJ acquired 113 seats, which was a 60-seats decrease from the 2003 result. There was a great change in the number of seats of the two major parties because of the effect of the sudden change of the SMD system. LDP seats in SMDs increased suddenly from 168 seats in the 2003 election to 219 seats in 2005. In contrast, DPJ seats in SMDs decreased sharply from 105 seats in 2003 to 52 seats in 2005. For instance, Kaoru Yosano described this election result as follows:

“I think that an electoral system that changes dramatically due to just one theme is very dangerous. ……I think that the people have been encouraging the good and punishing the evil elections in the excitement”⁸.

Analysis: Koizumi whirlwind in the urban area

The media gave the label “assassin candidate” to candidates run by the LDP against rebellious LDP members. Campaigns of a new figure female candidate Yukari Sato versus an famous female incumbent Seiko Noda in Gifu 1 district, and a young, famous entrepreneur, Takafumi Horie versus an influen-

8 Yosano, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

tial assembly member Shizuka Kamei in Hiroshima 6 district drew special media attention.

Winners in the 33 electoral districts were composed of 15 rebellion candidates (45.5%), 14 assassin candidates (42.4%), and four DPJ candidates (12.1%).

The author classifies these 33 electoral districts into urban, intermediate, and the rural type districts, and calculates each chance of success. Taku Sugawara calculated the Densely Inhabitant District (DID) population ratio of 300 electoral districts from the 2000 census data and classified the urban, intermediate, and rural type districts into 100 electoral districts each⁹.

As a result, there were five urban type districts, five intermediate type districts, and 23 rural type districts. In a word, many assembly members who opposed privatization of postal services were rural type districts assembly members. This reflects the birth of the confrontation axis of urban versus farm village.

The reelection rate of the rebellious members in urban type district was absolute zero, and that of the rebellious members in intermediate type districts was 20%. In contrast, 61% of the rebellious members in rural type districts won re-election.

This result indicates that there are many party voters in the urban type electoral districts, but candidate voters dominate rural type districts. Here, party voters vote along party lines, but candidate voters vote for the best individual candidate regardless of his or her party affiliation.

If we assume the vote share acquired in 2003 to be 100, then the calculated average yield in 2005 was 69.7%. In other words, the vote share of rebellious LDP members decreased on average 30 percent due to the assassin candidates. The percentage of the LDP vote share in rural type districts was higher than that of urban type districts. The yield rate (average) was 53.5% in urban type districts, 65.1% in intermediate districts, and 73.5% in the rural type districts.

From the viewpoint of the electoral system, the LDP domination in the 2005 general election appears to be chiefly the effect of the sudden change of SMD.

The LDP expanded its acquired seats in SMDs from 168 in 2003 to 219 in 2005. So, the number of LDP in SMD increased by 41 seats. The total number of LDP increased from 237 seats in 2003 to 296 seats in 2005 and 59 seats in the total number of seat increase primarily due to the seat increase in SMD. The majority were due to the seat increase by the character of SMD.

In contrast, the DPJ seats in SMDs were reduced by half from 105 seats in 2003 to 52 seats in 2005. The total number of DPJ seats decreased from 177 seats in 2003 to 113 seats in 2005. Therefore, the majority were due to the seat decrease in SMD. SMD were thus an important institutional factor on of the

9 Taku Sugawara HP *Nihonseiji Sho Bunseki* (*An Analysis of Japanese Politics*) http://page.freett.com/sugawara_taku/data/2003_did.html

historical victory of the LDP in 2005 election. The LDP vote share in 2005 was 48% and the seats share of it was 73%. So, the LDP was 1.5 times an excessive representative.

Recently, the top party has acquired about 1.5 times the number of seats in Britain where they have adopted SMD. For the second party, the difference between vote share and the seat share had been relatively small¹⁰. In Japan, the second parties difference between vote share and the seat share have also been relatively small in recent elections.

When a strong wind blows to either of them, SMDs often experience a leap and a great decrease in seats. For instance, it is often quoted that the Progressive Conservative Party in Canada that had acquired 169 seats, a working majority in the 1990 general election, but that decreased sharply to only two seats in the 1993 general election.

The sudden change occurs easily in the urban type districts because the relationship between voter and candidate is relatively weak, as the majority of urban voters vote for the party, not for the candidate.

For instance, rebellion candidate Shizuka Kamei was re-elected in Hiroshima district 6, a rural district, while rebellion candidate Koki Kobayashi suffered a disastrous defeat by female candidate Yuriko Koike in Tokyo district 10, an urban type district.

The author compared the general elections in 2003 and 2005 according to the urbanization level of the electoral district. Table 3 indicates the seat share of the LDP and the DPJ for three types of districts.

The effect of the sudden change is seen in the election of the urban district as shown here. In urban type districts, the seats acquired by the LDP increased greatly from 32 in 2003 to 73 in 2005. About 80 percent of LDP increase in SMDs was due to the seat increase in urban type districts.

The DPJ seats, on the other hand, decreased from 59 seats in 2003 in the urban districts to 16 seats in 2005. So, over 80 percent of LDP decrease in SMDs was due to the seat decrease in urban type districts.

In contrast, the seat share of parties in rural type districts hardly changes. The main cause of this difference is the difference in the relation between the

Table 3 Results of the LDP and the DPJ by district type

	2003		2005	
	LDP	DPJ	LDP	DPJ
Urban Type (100)	31	60	73	16
Intermediate Type (100)	58	35	72	25
Rural Type (100)	79	10	74	11
Total	168	105	219	52

10 Masamichi Ida (2002) "Senkyoron (Election)" In Takashi Takeo and Ida, eds., *Gendaiseiji wo Miru Me (An Introduction to Contemporary Politics)* Tokyo: Yachiyo Shuppan, p. 91.

candidate and voters. Solid votes for individual candidates are a minority in urban areas. However, there is a close relation between candidates (assembly members) and the voters in rural areas, and there are many candidate votes. Therefore, in urban areas, many voters vote for the party, not for the candidate. In rural areas, however, many voters vote for the candidate, not for the party. Party voting is easily influenced by the political situation at that time.

Next, we try to examine the vote share of the proportional representation section. Comparing results for 2003 and 2005, the LDP vote share increased by 3.2 points. Additionally, the DPJ vote share decreased 6.4 points. New Komeito and Japanese Communist Party (JCP) had slight decreases, and Social Democratic Party (SDP) saw a marginal rise. It can be said that the increase in turnout rate in 2005 was disadvantageous for the New Komeito and JCP.

Figures 3 and 4 plot the LDP and DPJ vote share in PR tier by eleven block in the 2003 and 2005 general elections.

The LDP extended its vote share in blocks with many urban areas. The LDP vote share increased in Minamikanto, Tokyo, and Kinki, and Tokai blocks. However, the LDP vote share did not increase in Hokkaido, Tohoku, Hokusin-etsu, Chugoku, Shikoku, and Kyushu blocks. In other words, the expansion of the LDP support because of the Koizumi's popularity was intense in metropolitan areas, especially the metropolitan areas in the Kanto region. The LDP vote share is dropping the vote share in Hokkaido.

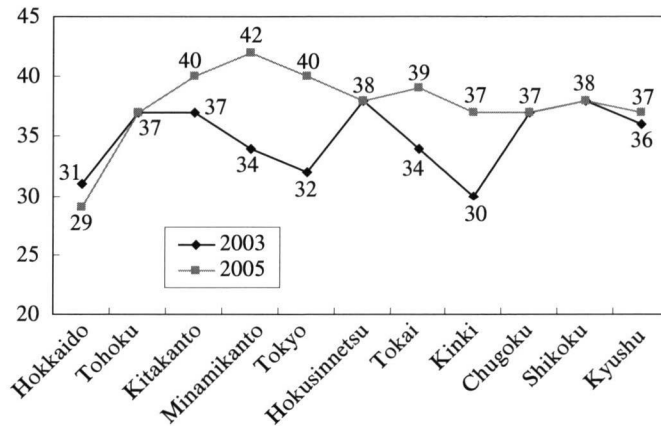
For the LDP, only the structural reform was proven to be the most effective of the city measures. In the general election of 2000, the LDP fought hard in urban areas, and it was necessary to response to urban voters.

In contrast, the DPJ vote share increased only in Shikoku Block, and dropped sharply in Minamikanto, Tokyo, and the Kinki blocks. The reason of DPJ vote share increased in the urban areas in the 2000 election may be interpreted that the urban voter judged the DPJ to be more ardent in structural reform than the LDP at that time. However, in the 2005 election, the urban voters judged the LDP to be more ardent supportive of structural reform than the DPJ. In other words, the orientation toward small government especially appealed to urban voters. The results of the 2000 and 2005 elections imply that the policy on structural reform is the most effective for attracting urban voters.

Moreover, the LDP, has conducted an electoral campaign centered on the individual supporters' association organization "Koenkai." The electoral campaign can be said to have a "Ground battle style".

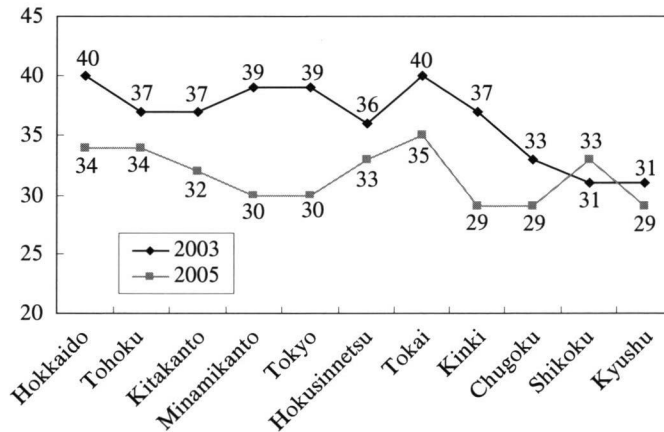
It has been assumed that this is a factor of strength in a long series of LDP elections. Moreover, the ground battle is especially effective in rural areas where the relation between the voter and the assembly member (or candidate) is more intimate. However, the effect is limited in urban areas where the relation among residents is comparatively weak, and thus the LDP remained a rural type political party.

The DPJ has less powerful organization than the LDP, and has tried to bring an "Air fight Style" into the electoral campaign. The air fight electoral



Data Source: *The Asahi Shimbun*, November 10, 2003 and September 12, 2005.

Figure 3 LDP vote share by PR block



Data Source: *The Asahi Shimbun*, November 10, 2003 and September 12, 2005.

Figure 4 DPJ vote share by PR block

campaign is a policy-centered campaign that uses the mass media, and emphasizes the party leader's image.

The 2000 electoral campaign was held under the circumstance of low approval rating for the Mori Cabinet, so the DPJ tried to set an agenda in which the election is a selection between Prime Minister Mori and Prime Minister Hatoyama (the party leader of the DPJ at that time).

Moreover, introducing the manifesto in the 2003 electoral campaign further developed the air-fight campaign. This air-fight style was especially effective in urban parts that have many non-aligned voters. As a result, the DPJ had characteristics of an urban political party.

However, after the Koizumi administration took control in 2001, the LDP began implementing an air-fight style campaign. The LDP thus overwhelmed the DPJ by maximum uses of Koizumi's popularity and Makiko Tanaka's popu-

larity in the Upper House election in 2001, and that became a “Success experience”.

The decline of party loyalty among Japanese voters was mainly caused by the 1990’s political events, especially the split of the LDP in 1993. As a results, the air fight type of campaign was necessary to extend the LDP.

For instance, the sum of the LDP votes in the PR tier in Tokyo, the capital of Japan, was 1.02 million in the 1998 Upper House election and 1.11 million votes in the 2000 Lower House election. However, the LDP gained 1.76 million votes in the 2001 Upper House election due to Koizumi’s high popularity. At that time, the approval rate for Koizumi Cabinet exceeded 70%. The increase of the LDP vote share in the 2001 Upper House election was especially high in the urban areas of Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Saitama¹¹.

Implications of the 2005 general election

Finally, we will briefly discuss the implication of the 2005 general election which had significance for Japanese politics. The author thinks that this election result doesn’t mean the revival of LDP dominance, but it is a step toward two-party system. Because the number of vote for DPJ maintained high level (over twenty million votes).

In addition, the 2005 election exhibited the presidentialization of Japanese politics. Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb defined the presidentialization of politics in their book *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies* as follows:

1. Leadership power resources: The head of government has superior executive power resource, for instance, the power to legitimate and to form a cabinet.
2. Leadership Autonomy: The head of the executive enjoys autonomy to his own party and the political executive of the state.
3. Personalization of the electoral process: Electoral process are decisively moulded by the personalities of party leaders.

It follows from this that de facto presidentialization of politics can be understood as the development of (a) increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party and political executive respectively, and (b) increasingly leadership-centered electoral processes. Essentially, three central arenas of democratic government are affected by these changes, the executive face, the party face and the electoral face, respectively¹².

11 Masamichi Ida (2007) *Nihon Seiji no Tyoryu (The Tide of Japanese Politics)* Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, p. 69.

12 Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (2005) *The Presidentialization of Politics of Democratic Societies: A Framework for Analysis*, In Poguntke and Webb, eds., *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 5.

The periods of the Koizumi administration and the 2005 election demonstrated that there were developments of (a) increasing Prime Minister power resources within the party and political autonomy of the executive, and (b) increasingly leadership-centered electoral campaign. Poguntke and Webb said many democratic political systems are coming to operate according an essentially presidential logic, irrespective of their formal constitutional make-up. The author think the tendency applies also in Japan. And, the tendency appeared remarkably in the 2005 election.

Prime Minister's power increased in the age of Koizumi administration. For instance, a Japanese Political Scientist Harukata Takenaka expressed it "Prime Minister rule (In Japanese, *Shusho Shihai*)"¹³. The compilation of Koizumi politics was the dissolution and general election in 2005. We can say that the result of the 2005 general election is caught with the victory of "Koizumi" rather than the victory of the LDP.

The main cause of the presidentialization was the political reform in the 1990's. The power of the party leadership increased when the SMD system was introduced into the electoral system of the lower house election and political party and party leader's influence became stronger than that of an individual candidate. In that sense, the 2005 election was a consequence of the political reform.

Of course, the weakening relation between the political party and Japanese voter also operated in the background. Many Japanese voters, disillusioned and frustrated with politics since the collapse of the Hosokawa coalition in 1994, gave up all party affiliations and became independents. Consequently, the influence of long-term factors such as ideology and party identification has been declining in Japan during the past decade. The mobilizing power of social groups, such as industry organizations and labor unions, also has been weakening. Short-term factors, including political issues and politicians' popularity, on the other hand, have gained influence on voting behavior and suggest an increasing influence of the mass media in Japanese election campaigns. Koizumi's landslide victory in the 2005 general election, for example, might be attributable to his superb strategy and compelling appeals to the public through television. The medium seemed to help Koizumi put his "own" issue, privatization of postal services, on the top of the election agenda and transform the election into a single-issue referendum. The weakening influence of long-term factors and the increasing use of the mass media in the political arena finally appear to push Japan into the age of modern media politics¹⁴.

13 Harukata Takenaka (2006) *Shusho Shihai (Prime Minister Rule)* Tokyo: Chuokoron-shinsha.

14 See Toshio Takeshita and Masamichi Ida (2009) "Political Communication in Japan", In Lars Willnat and Annette Aw, eds., *Political Communication in Asia*. New York: Routledge, pp. 153-75.